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Peace Society, the venerable **BENSON**. These men have gone ; the hollow, sepulchral tone of warning and exhortation arises from their tomb ; but in the charities which they laboured to promote, in the impulses which they imparted, in the energy of their example, they live, and will live, until the sound of strife shall cease, and the noise of battle be no longer heard upon the earth.

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## ARTICLE II.

### THE OBJECT OF PEACE SOCIETIES PRACTICABLE.

BY WILLIAM M. HOLLAND, PROFESSOR IN WASHINGTON COLLEGE, HARTFORD.

THE good natured indifference, with which superficial observers regard the efforts of the friends of peace, would be to those who are engaged in those efforts, a source of amusement, if they could permit themselves to be amused in a matter so serious. The operations of war are so grand, terrific and startling, and the efforts of peace-makers so quiet and unobtrusive, that to those who look only at the surface of things, nothing appears to be more futile than any attempt to counteract the former by the latter. The historian records that all ages and nations have been stained with blood ; the philosopher observes the furious passions inherent in man ; the theologian reflects on his depravity of heart ; the phrenologist examines his combative organs, and all agree that he was born to fight, and that any efforts to restrain the tendency of his mischief-making propensities, are little short of insanity. War, to be sure, is a great evil ; all know it to be so ; but then there must be wars ; men will fight ; nations will disagree ; monarchs will be covetous, and unjust, and oppressive ; human nature is always the same ; wars have always raged and always will rage, until a miraculous influence from heaven shall bring on the glorious era of the millennium. What then can a few voluntary asso-

ciations of individuals hope to effect? Can they change the nature of man; or control the lust of ambition and tyranny? Can they spread the oil of peace over the angry sea of human passion? The attempt is hopeless: it is weakness and folly to engage in it. The members of peace societies may be very amiable enthusiasts; their cause is a very good one; we should have no objection to their success; but their means are wholly inadequate to the object they have in view. Their project is unattainable, and to devote thereto, either time or money, is to waste resources which should be devoted to some end less chimerical and hopeless.

Such are the prevailing sentiments of the great mass of careless observers. They regard the friends of universal peace, who are uniting for cooperation, as “amiable enthusiasts,” with very good intentions, but consummately foolish. They suppose these weak well-wishers to their species have never rightly estimated the magnitude of that with which they propose to contend and the feebleness of their own resources. They regard war as a necessary evil, now grown to such magnitude and occurring with such frequency, that nothing in man can arrest it; and least of all, a few feeble societies, scattered over the Christian world and merely appealing, in the accents of reason and religion, to the common sense of mankind.

We propose briefly to examine some of these current opinions, and to ascertain, if possible, as well for our own advantage as for the enlightenment of our kind and tolerant friends, whether the objects we have in view are so utterly beyond all reasonable hope of attainment, and the means at our command, so immeasurably below the end we aim at.

It is something, however, we may remark in passing, that our *object* is admitted to be good. The being regarded with indulgence, as respects our motives, and with commiserating pity, that we are so totally unable to effect our purposes, is one point gained. Herein we are more fortunate than many others, and we are suitably grateful in being credited with the possession of honest *hearts*, though we are supposed to be guided by weak *heads*; and if, as is generally supposed, our

efforts are harmless, we may presume they will come to be regarded with favour, if we can show them to be efficient and reasonable.

What then, are the objects of Peace Societies, and what are the means they possess to effect those objects?

The first article of the Constitution of the American Peace Society is in the following words: *The object of the society shall be to diffuse light respecting the evils of war and the best means of effecting its abolition.* With similar purport, the second article of the Constitution of the Connecticut Peace Society says; *The object of the society shall ever be to diffuse correct information, by the printing and distributing of Addresses, Tracts, &c., to the extent of its funds, respecting the evils of war, and the best means of effecting its abolition by the promotion of permanent and universal peace.*

The ninth article of the Constitution of the American Peace Society, provides, that “the object of the Society shall never be changed.”

Such, then, is the object of these associations. We presume they have never been exactly understood by those who regard them as foolish and chimerical. It appears to have been supposed by many, that the *immediate* extinction of war was the end proposed. But it will readily be seen that Peace Societies entertain a more moderate design, and one which is more immediately within the reach of reasonable efforts.

A near and careful consideration of their immediate and only object will, we are persuaded, relieve them from the charge of folly and enthusiasm. They propose “to diffuse light respecting the evils of war, and the best means of effecting its abolition.” Is there any thing irrational or quixotic in this proposition? The means they propose to employ are “the printing and distributing of addresses, tracts, &c., to the extent of their funds.” It appears to us that both the object and the means are rational. Their exertions are to be limited to the extent of their funds, and these funds are to be applied to the printing and distributing of tracts, and other publications, and the adoption of similar means “to diffuse correct information.” Nothing sure-

ly can be more reasonable ; no design more simple, unique, and well refined. Any association, however humble, nay, any individual of moderate property and zeal, might hope in some measure to effect it.

It will also be seen by this exposition, what the Peace Societies do not expect or propose to effect. It is not an object they have immediately in view, to abolish all war and bloodshed upon the face of the earth. They do not expect or propose to obtain a controlling influence, at once, over the public mind, and over monarchs and national councils. They have it not for their immediate object to effect an instant revolution in human nature, or to open men's eyes, in a day, to the folly and wickedness of destroying each other. They are not so foolish as to suppose that the evil passions which distract mankind can be lulled, at once, into repose ; that savages will become Christians, and Christians become wholly righteous in a day. They have too thorough a knowledge of the perverseness of man's nature, and of his subjection to evil passions, to expect that the voice of reason and religion will, instantly, secure his attention and correct his practices. Let not these things then be laid to their charge in disparagement of the reasonableness of their undertaking. Neither let it be said that their efforts are directed to the destruction of patriotism and the means of national defence. The Peace Society requires no pledge from its members. For aught that appears in its constitution, the greatest warrior of the age might become one of its members and contributors. No pledge is required with respect to individual conduct ; no creed or subscription to any class of sentiments. Its members may believe in the necessity, or even utility, in certain cases, of war. To be sure, the object of the society implies that there are evils attendant upon war, and that the extent of these evils is not sufficiently understood. Few persons who consider the subject, will probably dissent from this implication. It will, also, readily be admitted, that a thorough knowledge of these evils, on the part of the community, is desirable. Even they who believe in the unavoidable necessity of war, and its occasional utility, may be willing to have cor-

rect information diffused as regards the evil consequences which flow from martial conflicts. If it be conceded that some wars are just and necessary, it cannot, on the other hand be denied, that even these wars are in many respects fraught with suffering and distress ; while of those which are unnecessary and unjust, nothing flows but unmixed evil.

It is, then, both laudable and reasonable to diffuse correct information on the subject of war. Without this information, men cannot judge when war may be expedient, and when it may involve greater distress than will be endured without it. The diffusion of this kind of information does not at all interfere with patriotism or national security. On the contrary, it is very essential to the discreet exercise of the patriotic sentiment. The patriot should understand the true interests of his country. If he does not properly estimate the evil effects of war and bloodshed, he may hastily rush into a contest in which his blind zeal will but increase the distress he would avoid.

It may be the theory of some governments, that ignorance and delusion, in the people, are necessary to their preservation ; but such a doctrine can gain no converts in a republic. The more completely the public mind is enlightened, the more firmly are freedom and national security established.

With this view of the object of Peace Societies, we are prepared to enquire whether this object can probably be effected by the means to which the society has resorted. And on this point we shall meet with no difference of opinion. Information with respect to the evils of war is easily obtained ; it may be found in all history ; it may be gleaned from personal observation ; it may be deduced by argument from the very nature of war. The amount of information is, indeed, immense ; vastly greater we presume than is usually apprehended. Hitherto, the fair side of warfare has generally been presented to mankind. We have only heard of victories and glory, conquests and wealth. The splendour of martial achievements has been pictured in the pages of eloquence and poetry. The evils have been shaded in forgetfulness. Truth has, therefore, a laborious duty to perform in bringing to light the other as-

pect of warfare, and in showing the distress and crime which are concealed beneath the pomp of military exploits and operations. If the glories of war furnish the materials of thousands of volumes of history, romance and poetry, its curses and evils may surely be sufficient to furnish matter for the publications of the Peace Society. The press is free, it may be put in operation at a moderate expense, and the hope of diffusing the kind of information proposed, is neither preposterous nor unreasonable.

But the objector may still ask—for whose benefit all this is attempted? He may admit that our object is good, and our means adequate to its accomplishment, but may continue to doubt whether it be of sufficient importance to require his co-operation.

In answer to this objection, we have to remark, that if no higher motive prevail, self interest will attract attention to the considerations in favour of peace, which we are attempting to lay before the public. It may certainly be shown that war is a tremendous evil, vastly more ruinous to human happiness than former generations have been aware of. If this be true, and we can bring mankind, or any portion of them to believe and feel it, we may reasonably hope that self-interest will lead them to avoid the errors of ignorance under which their forefathers suffered so much. We are not aiming to build up any sect or party. We are simply endeavouring to teach unreflecting men how to estimate and avoid one class of evils. We are asking for no self sacrifice; for the control of the brutish propensities is a triumph, and not a sacrifice. We are seeking to dissipate a delusion, inherited from ages when reason and religion were enslaved by the base propensities. We are pleading the cause of humanity and religion, of enlightened self interest, against the voice of passion, prejudice, and misguided bravery. And we have every reason to believe we shall make ourselves heard. The evils of war are real and serious. They second our appeal. Mankind will eagerly embrace any hope of escape from them. We believe their full hideousness has never been made known. We are conscious that we have the pow-

er, with perseverance and energy, to make them known, at least in some degree. Shall we not have the thanks of our fellow-men? When the evils of war are fully portrayed, will not self-interest render the practice more rare?

It is vain to deny that a pacific disposition is pervading mankind. We are far from claiming this fact as the result of our labours. Civilization and Christianity are the great antagonists of war. Yet a disposition to peaceful relations has been considerably increased by clearer views of the evils of warfare. Mankind begin to compare what they lose with what they gain by warfare, and find the former immeasurably outweighing the latter.

It is true, that at the present moment when the evils of war are distant, a discussion of those evils does not violently arrest the public attention. But let the question of peace or war seriously arise, and the arguments and facts which Peace Societies are now quietly collecting and laying up, will be sought for and examined. At such a moment, ere the fatal step is taken, both rulers and people will review the neglected arguments and statistics. If war be unchristian, if it be clearly destructive of national wealth and commerce, if its objects may be peacefully obtained and its manifold evils avoided—in such a moment, the consideration of these facts will be thorough and intense, both on the part of rulers and people, before either will venture to appeal to arms.

It is, moreover, a well known fact that many eminent men, in all Christian countries, are taking new views of this subject.

The evils of war are attracting attention. The spirit of philanthropy is awakened. Men have pity for the sufferings of their fellow-men. They are questioning, in various directions, whether these sufferings may not be avoided. Commerce is gaining such ascendancy and uniting itself so closely with all the interests of the community that her voice is heard against every proposition to resort to arms. The merchant will listen to our arguments when we show how war annihilates his interests. The Christian will hear us, if we can evince the inconsistency of war with the principles of his religion. The



patriot will regard our suggestions, if we can show that national difficulties may be amicably adjusted. The most selfish man in the community will hear us tell him of the inevitable disadvantages entailed upon himself by rushing to arms. We shall thus speak to willing ears, and write for eager eyes. An imperceptible influence will flow into the minds of men from the press. Literature will change its tone. Military glory will be coupled with many painful associations. The ambition of the truly great will be directed into other channels; they will strive to be the benefactors, and not the scourges of their race. The conqueror will feel that both aspects of his operations will be painted; that the trump of victory will be answered by the groans of the wretched; and that, how great soever may be the achievements of his valour, posterity, at least, will assuredly know that they were not untarnished by the infliction of unutterable distress.

Let it, then, no longer be lightly said, that the friends of peace are weak fanatics, who only deserve toleration and pity. If there be a nobler earthly aim than theirs, let it be pointed out. If more reasonable means were ever applied to a worthier end, let that end and those means be designated. The friends of peace demand, not merely toleration and indulgence, but *approbation* and *assistance*. They ask who are for war and who for peace? Who are for concealing from mankind the evils of a barbarous custom, and who are for exposing and removing them? They demand whether it be not both laudable and practicable to bring to light the evils of war, and to suggest means for its total abolition? If this be fanaticism, they covet the distinction it confers. It will be found that their objects are not merely harmless, but positively useful; that they are already proceeding to carry them into effect with zeal and success, and are beginning to witness useful results from their exertions.